[171] [22] Unlike their neighbors ÁJUMBA PRÓPA

831 Parana the Kaingáng have no love magic. They are, in general, a very practical and aggressive people and not given to the use of charms. They view all people but little children as spontaneously, vigorously and indiscriminately sexual, and act accordingly.

The young man who, urged at last by his desire for a woman to cook and keep house for him, and the young woman who, impelled by her wish to have someone who will constantly care for her, at last settle down with a spouse, have this background of philandering, jesting and frequently adulterous sexual experience that will color married life into old age. Kaingáng men and women are not advised by their parents to be faithful to one another. The only case I heard of is that of Amendó who was one of the wives of Wanyekí. When she and her sisters married him her mother said to her: "Live with him. If they leave him, you remain with him." And she always did.[2]

[647]

● 581 In our society the traditional, the ideal stabilizer of marriage is love—an 586 exclusive sex interest in one person. The Kaingáng have no tradition, no background for the development of such an interest. Marriage in other primitive societies is sometimes stabilized by a large payment for the bride, but in Kaingáng society there is no such payment. If a woman leaves her husband she can always find a relative who will take care of her. Her brother or her cousin or her sister will always take her in, and although she lacks the full security that marriage gave her she need not starve, for there are any number of men who will accept her as an added responsibility without complaint, even boasting a little that they took care of her and that she called them yógn.[3] Besides having this dependable bulwark to her security a woman's own aggressiveness makes it far easier for her to get another husband than for a woman in a similar position in our society. When a woman is left without a husband the liaisons which she has established surreptitiously serve her in good stead, for then one of her lovers may become her new husband.[4]

[523]

586 Chukembégn had been having some trouble with his wife, Chantágn. When he left her for a few days to go hunting he told his hunting companions that he was going to leave his wife. News got back to the post before he returned. One day Chantágn, who had previously amused herself by casual approaches to me, called me. I came out of my house and sat down where anyone who happened to be around could see us. "What do

[2] See p. 30. These people have been long dead.

[3] See Appendix II, p. 177. Such a woman can partially earn her keep by gathering fruit and wood, helping with the cooking and the children, and clearing the ground for camp sites. If she has lovers they will contribute to the family larder.

[4] Sometimes, though rarely, former husbands may become lovers, but this does not occur where the woman herself has rejected them as husbands.

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you want?" said I. "Chukembégn is going to leave me." "Oh, no, he isn't." 586
"Yes, he is. He said so up the river and they are talking about it." "But he is not going to leave you." "How do you know?" "He told me." "What did he tell you?" "He told me that he loves you." I used the strongest term that the language has to offer, a term that I heard used only in folktales. "But he *is* going to leave me. Julio, if he leaves me, will you marry me?" "No," said I; "I never marry anyone." And there the matter rested.[8]

A man separated from his wife may live with someone else and share 581
his fire. At the worst he can cook his own meals and spread his own bed, 593
for no shame attaches to a man who does a woman's work. But after a 855
woman has borne three children a marriage does not break up. The 764
woman needs the man to take care of her children, and Kaingáng men are 766
fond fathers. There is no end to the fondling and delousing a child gets from its father and other men. He makes toys for it and takes it hunting for company. Nowadays they are as much interested in having their little girls decked out in brand new calico dresses as American mothers are in getting their children permanent waves. Even in death parents do not relinquish their children, for, they say, a child who dies before the age of about twelve returns to its mother's womb and is reborn. The corpse of a grown-up is placed on the funeral pyre, pounded on the chest and told to go away, and summarily burnt. But, I was told, a little child is placed in a grave, covered with wholesome herbs and begged to return. Its mother puts a little honey and meat aside for it, puts her baby's carrying-band on her head and walks about crying, "Come here, come here! Come and eat the meat and honey I have put aside for you. If you stay in some other camp one will be angry with you! Come back! Come back!"

Except for the somewhat aberrant Chukembégn there is not a single case 586
of a marriage dissolved after three children had been born. Chukembégn was a child of about nine when the Kaingáng settled on the reservation, and he grew up in close contact with the agent. He married Tendó but left her after she had borne him three children. His present wife, Chantágn, "led him away by the hand." Now he rarely goes near Tendó, but she is still regarded as his wife. Two years after leaving her he still buys cloth for her to make dresses for herself and her children. Yet idle tongues will wag, and one day when Chukembégn, Klendó, and I were hunting together, Chukembégn burst out: "It is not true that I ignore her. I got medicine and bought a chicken for her when she was ill!" Klendó observed mildly that he had never said that Chukembégn had not taken care of her. Then Chukembégn, turning to me, blurted in Portuguese: "This man has

[8] I mention this, and other cases in which I myself have been one of the actors, not because they are the only instances of the kind that I have, but because they are usually the most complete.

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been saying that I have not been taking care of that woman, but I have!" Tendó had not married again and the community refused to admit that Chukembégn's obligations to her were ended.

Indeed I have no way of telling what would happen if a woman in such a position remarried, for Kaingáng society has no other such case to offer in more than a hundred and fifty years of its history.[6] Unless a woman is separated from her husband under the conditions of vendetta, a couple with several children stays together till death. Although the case of Chukembégn and Tendó is isolated it emphasizes the Kaingáng attitude toward marriages of long standing that have produced several children. The breaking up of Tendó's household left the society confused as to just how it should treat Chukembégn for there were no parallel instances. So they simply continued to insist that he owed some kind of support to Tendó, even though he planted his field with Chantágn, seldom went to visit Tendó, and that only when absolutely necessary, and maintained the most tenuous relations with her family.

But separations before many children are born are legion. Young people frequently pass through one or two marriages before they finally settle down. The relationship between the sexes is informal, and there is no marriage ceremony. In its early stages the only thing that distinguishes a marriage from a protracted affair is the announcement by the principals that they are married. There is no term for marriage. The Kaingáng use the term *sé*, to sit, to express the husband-wife relationship. "He sat with her" means "he married her." Sometimes people do not know whether a couple who have separated have ever been "married." Even before marriage a man and woman may go hunting together, and unless her family takes it upon itself to "send her to him" or the man and woman themselves decide to set up a household, the relationship between the two remains unchanged. The man may even hunt with his sweetheart's relatives and contribute to the household's food supply without yet having the status of a husband. When one of the woman's brothers or sisters or parents see that she is pregnant they may "send her to" her most constant lover, but no stigma attaches to an extramarital birth. Mothers are just as passionately attached to their illegitimate[7] children as they are to their legitimate and all the children have equal chances in life. Illegitimacy, so often the pivotal point of some of the most dramatic episodes in our own and in primitive societies, is completely lacking in drama among the Kaingáng.

Though the Kaingáng know that unfaithfulness and brittleness are inevitable conditions of marriage among them, its implied permanence and

[6] My genealogies go back about two hundred years and include five hundred individuals of all ages. The fact that a woman has one or two children is no obstacle to her remarriage.

[7] I use this term simply to indicate children born out of wedlock.

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the actual security it affords make them seek it eagerly, and in spite of the lightness with which they seem to take it no marriage can be broken without some kind of mild stir and an early effort on the part of the principals to form another alliance, while their relatives try to patch up the old one. When Chantágn only felt that she *might* lose her husband she was already at my door asking whether I would be her next. However, unstable it may be, particularly in the beginning, marriage nevertheless is one of the ideal pillars of security on which the Kaingáng personality seeks ever to support itself. They have built their society on warm personal attachments, and anyone without such attachments makes them uneasy and perplexed. No one is spoken of more sadly than a mature person who is alone. "For a long time," said Vomblé sadly, "my father wandered around all over without a wife. At last when his brother died he married his wives." The women who did not try to interest me in themselves or in their children besought me to marry someone else—anyone—and one day even Yokó, a matron who was generally too shy to speak much to me, quizzed me uncomprehendingly on my bachelorhood and advised me to marry—not so that I could have someone to cook for me and mend my clothes, but just in order to be married. "Why? Why?" she kept repeating, "why do you live thus without a wife? Get a wife." "Whom shall I marry?" said I. "Marry anybody. Why go around unmarried?" Even the children found it hard to believe that I was single and they used to question me interminably: "Have you a wife in your country?" "Have you a sweetheart in your country?" "Will you marry her when you go back?" "Do you intend to marry?"

Once a couple are married they do not drop the liaisons formed before marriage. Their long training in philandering and the absence of an ideal of faithfulness have not suited them to the stability that marriage implies. Furthermore the absence of binding legal forms or big property stakes, as well as the knowledge that a meal can always be found at one's father's or brother's fire, that one's mother or sister-in-law is ready to cook the food and spread the bed, makes marriage brittle and its rupture not sharply felt. Yet, in an utterly contradictory manner, the Kaingáng believe that a man and woman, once they are "sitting together," belong to each other, and they use the same word to designate this possession as they use for the exclusive possession of material objects. This theoretical possessiveness comes into constant conflict with the actual sharing in which the young people have taken part all their lives. The young man who for years before his marriage has dallied with the wife of anyone from his father to his second cousin, who has day in and day out enjoyed adultery with an equally delighted adulteress, decides suddenly, once he is married, that his possession should be exclusive. "I left my wife," Yuvén said to me, "because she took Kanyahé and Kundígn as lovers. She sleeps with everyone. All the women

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837 are that way. When their husbands go away they sleep with others. That is
● 581 why I want to marry a Brazilian woman."

837 The conflict between the sharing that is experienced and absolutely exclusive possession, which is simply and unqualifiedly theory, is far more fundamental in Kaingáng society than it is in our own. Adultery in Kaingáng society is not a circumstance of some marriages but a condition of practically all. Yet, although husband and wife live in constant suspicion of each other's loyalty, it rarely becomes desperate. Husbands do not as a rule follow their wives about, nor wives their husbands, although if there are good grounds for suspicion a husband may beat his wife or a wife her husband. He often leaves her for days at a time even when he knows that there are enterprising men still in camp and no one to chaperon her. This attitude really saves the culture from becoming a nightmare. In a society in which everyone believes that everybody else is engaged in seducing his neighbor's wife, suspicion backed by intense jealousy would drive people to desperation. But when Waipó leaves his wife to go across the river to make manioc all she has to say to him is a laughing, "You're going over there where everyone is living in very close quarters," and with a rough caress he is gone. One evening when Chukembégn and I were coming from the manioc mill I said to him, "Now that you've left your wife alone she may sleep with someone else." "I don't care; let her," said he. There is something more than mere bravado in this statement. It expresses the typical determination not to see what is not forced on one.

582 Since hunting is the most vital occupation, it might be supposed that a good hunter would be the most desirable husband. It might be felt also that since the Kaingáng used to be perpetually at war with the Brazilians, with the Kangdjá, and with their vendetta enemies, they would place a high premium on ferocity, daring, bravery, enterprise, and intelligence and that these traits would influence a woman in the choice of a husband. Nevertheless a number of attitudes combined to render all these qualities almost completely inoperative.

224 Although hunting is the very basis of their economy the Kaingáng,
654 curiously enough, do not recognize differences in hunting skill. If a man returns empty-handed from the hunt he and his wife may share their relatives' food without shame. In all the time I was among the Kaingáng I never heard an unsuccessful hunter spoken of with scorn nor saw one overcome with shame, and although she may scold him roundly, no wife ever leaves her husband for coming home without meat.

227 Just as they assume that all men are practically equals in hunting skill
167 the Kaingáng assume that all men are brave. Special emphasis is laid on this trait, therefore, only in exceptional cases. This holds also for intelligence, for the Kaingáng have a strong tendency to think of wisdom

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Angneló, the sister of Kangndádn. Kangndádn had married Thunder Storm's sister and the two men had become almost inseparable. Though they are dead their relationship is perpetuated today in the relationship of their sons. But it was only after Kangndádn had married Thunder Storm's sister that Thunder Storm married Angneló. It is not at all rare among the Kaingáng that when a man marries another man's sister, her brother marries her husband's sister. The constant companionship of the two men, thrown together by the first marriage, brings this about in an informal way. Chukembégn, who deserted his wife Tendó and three children, was "led away" from her by his brother-in-law's sister, a young woman whom he saw day after day in his sister's house.

There is still another way in which polygyny may come about and that is if a wife calls another woman to "work with her." The husband, ostensibly, has no hand in the matter at all. The woman who does this gains a helper and companion, one who will nurse her children when she is away, who will accompany her on fruit-gathering expeditions, who will relieve her of the heavy loads of meat she has to transport and who will care for her when she is ill. At the same time, however, she assumes in herself an ability to share which experience may prove to be non-existent. But the Kaingáng tell me, the first wife may become so jealous of the second that her continual anger at last drives the second wife out, even after she has borne as many as two children. First wives never leave in such a situation. Thus it comes about that a second wife in a polygynous marriage shifts about a good deal. If she is heckled by the first wife she begins to look more seriously on her lovers, and when she slips out of one marriage she slips as easily into another.

Polygyny is not always an entirely pleasant experience for a man, for although it is good to have a second wife during the several months after childbirth when intercourse with the mother is stopped, and two wives lighten each other's and their husband's burdens and bring in more food, a man must put up with their quarreling between themselves and the insults of either one who feels herself slighted.

Every marriage system is organized around some system of ideas no matter how unformulated they may be. Our own culture continually balances the ideal of love against the desire for property. The ideas that serve as the basis for the contraction of marriage carry within them the criteria by which all individuals are judged. We value people insofar as they are lovable or rich and powerful. Our ideas of what we consider a desirable sex companion are pretty clearly formulated and furnish the subject of many a conversation. But the Kaingáng are not educated to an ideal of love, and they have not formulated success in life in terms of wealth or prestige. Even raiding the Brazilians has given them little property, and

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the little they have they do not keep for themselves, but distribute among their relatives. My greatest trouble with them was that they could never understand "what you want with all that stuff" that I kept for trading, nor with the wood I accumulated against the rainy season. And they have carried the same attitudes into their marital relations.

Several wives are not a mark of prestige but the result of special events. Love as the nucleus of sexual relations implies loyalty in our culture, for loyalty is an essential part of love. Even where marriage lacks the essence but preserves the ideal it may still have a certain amount of loyalty left in it if other factors such as security and power make loyalty expedient, and early education has conditioned spouses to be loyal when they do not love. But the Kaingáng have never been educated to sexual loyalty, their *ethos* is not built on the twin columns of wealth and power, and no one starves among them as long as there is an ungnawed piece of tapir hide or a pine nut in camp. So in their informal, almost casual marriages they are not loyal to one another in the special sexual way in which we think of marriage loyalty—as an exclusive sex interest in one person. And because they are not fixated in their sexual interests and because there are no social forms and few economic considerations to stabilize marriage, it is extremely brittle until several children are born. Even then the stability that marriage achieves does not fix sexual interest.

The Kaingáng are a people with no sense of social form. As an artist with a fine feeling for form will communicate that sensitivity, that sense and realization of an "inner harmony," as one artist put it to me, to everything he does, a people with a feeling for or an interest in social form will do most of the things that are important to them in a highly stylized way.[13] If they are particularly interested in following lines of kinship or some other rules of organization almost everything will be done in accordance with their feelings of fitness as determined by these rules, and not a hunting party or a husking bee will be undertaken without its having been planned along the lines of this organization. If their interest runs to dancing and ceremonious display instead, they will manage to bring in dancing and ceremony on every occasion. But the Kaingáng have no interest in social forms of any kind. They have no pattern that will exclude one kind of relationship while permitting another. So their sexual relations show the same formlessness, excluding only parents and blood siblings and admitting every kind of marriage known to anthropology. The Kaingáng are not only monogamous and polygynous; but they were polyandrous too and they also established what I shall call "joint marriages" in which several men lived together with several women in mutual cohabitation. These last two types will be discussed in the following chapter.

[13] This refers, of course, to societies which are more highly structuralized.

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